



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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**LUJAN ANNOUNCES WETLANDS ACTION PLAN; GIVES FISH AND WILDLIFE
SERVICE LEAD ROLE IN WETLAND PROTECTION EFFORTS**

Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan today announced a comprehensive plan aimed at stemming destruction of this Nation's vanishing wetlands.

The Wetlands Action Plan, developed by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, outlines the Service's strategies for protecting, enhancing, and restoring wetlands, which are declining nationwide. Wetlands represent some of the planet's most diverse and productive ecosystems.

"This plan puts the weight of the Fish and Wildlife Service's expertise and resources to work to help achieve President Bush's goal of no overall net loss of wetlands," Lujan said. "In addition, it offers a framework within which the Service can work with other Federal agencies to seek creative strategies for conserving wetlands. I am confident that the Service, as a lead agency in the administration of Federal wetlands programs, can make significant strides toward achieving our no net loss goal."

Nearly 56 percent of the original wetlands in the 48 contiguous states have been destroyed or degraded. "With the Nation's wetlands disappearing at the rate of nearly 400,000 acres a year, the Wetlands Action Plan is urgently needed," said

John Turner, director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. "This plan is a positive, practical, workable strategy to coordinate the Service's wetlands programs and to work with other agencies in their wetland protection and enhancement efforts."

The Wetlands Action Plan is one of several far-reaching initiatives under way at the Interior Department to address wetlands protection. "Under the Secretary's stewardship, we have begun a very aggressive and well-coordinated program to be sure that Interior agencies will be an effective team in conserving these valuable areas," Turner said. Other Departmental activities include:

- o Interior is serving as the lead agency in providing staff and technical support for public meetings of the White House Domestic Policy Council's Wetlands Task Force, which is developing national strategies and policy recommendations to help advance the Administration's goal of "no net loss" of wetlands. The Wetlands Action Plan will be amended, if needed, at the conclusion of the Task Force's work to reflect its recommendations.
- o Interior is spearheading more than 50 wetlands conservation and restoration projects in the United States under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, a joint U.S./Canadian conservation effort. Since the plan was launched in 1986, nearly 600,000 wetland acres in the United States and Canada have been conserved. Working with the Fish and Wildlife

Service, other Interior agencies including the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Reclamation, are expanding their programs under the North American Plan.

- o The Fish and Wildlife Service is also forging wetland- and wildlife-related "conservation partnerships" with various private enterprises to advance wetland conservation programs. As one example, a cooperative venture includes participation in a wetlands and waterfowl public opinion survey conducted by the National Wildlife Federation.
- o Interior is targeting key waterfowl and shorebird habitats in the United States, Canada, and Mexico for enhancement with funding authorized by last year's North American Wetlands Conservation Act.
- o The Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wetlands Inventory monitors the well-being of wetlands nationwide and will soon issue its revised Status and Trends Report of Wetlands in the United States. The Inventory generates wetlands maps used by Federal, state, and local agencies for project planning. Recently, the Inventory's one-millionth wetland map rolled off the press.
- o Noted cartoonist Jim Davis and his ever-popular character "Garfield" are teaming up with the Fish and Wildlife Service to promote the values of wetlands to both man and wildlife. A public service announcement, aired initially in Davis' home state of Indiana, will air nationwide this year.

- o Sales of the Federal Migratory Waterfowl Hunting and Conservation Stamp (Duck Stamp) continue to foot the bill for acquisition of critical wetlands for inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The program is recognized as one of the most successful wetland conservation ventures in history. Since 1934, the Duck Stamp Program has generated over \$350 million to purchase nearly 4 million wetland acres.
- o The director of the Fish and Wildlife Service will assume chairmanship this year of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, a 60-nation consortium representing the best available scientific expertise in wetlands conservation worldwide.

Wetlands provide important economic and ecological benefits. They control floodwater, act as sediment traps and help filter pollutants from waters that move through them. As diverse and productive ecosystems, wetlands provide important habitat for many fish and wildlife species. About one-third of the species listed as Federally endangered or threatened depend on wetland habitats. Wetlands also support many of the Nation's coastal fisheries and provide nesting, migration, or wintering habitat for waterfowl, shore birds, wading birds, and many other wildlife species.

The Wetlands Action Plan draws on existing legislative authority, regulations, and directives, and identifies strategies for the Service to use in fulfilling its responsibilities to protect and enhance wetlands. The plan also identifies problems with existing wetlands strategies and outlines new opportunities to conserve wetlands through Federal programs.

Copies of the Wetlands Action Plan are available from the Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, 1849 C Street NW., Room 130 ARLSQ, Washington, DC 20240.